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PHILOSOPHY
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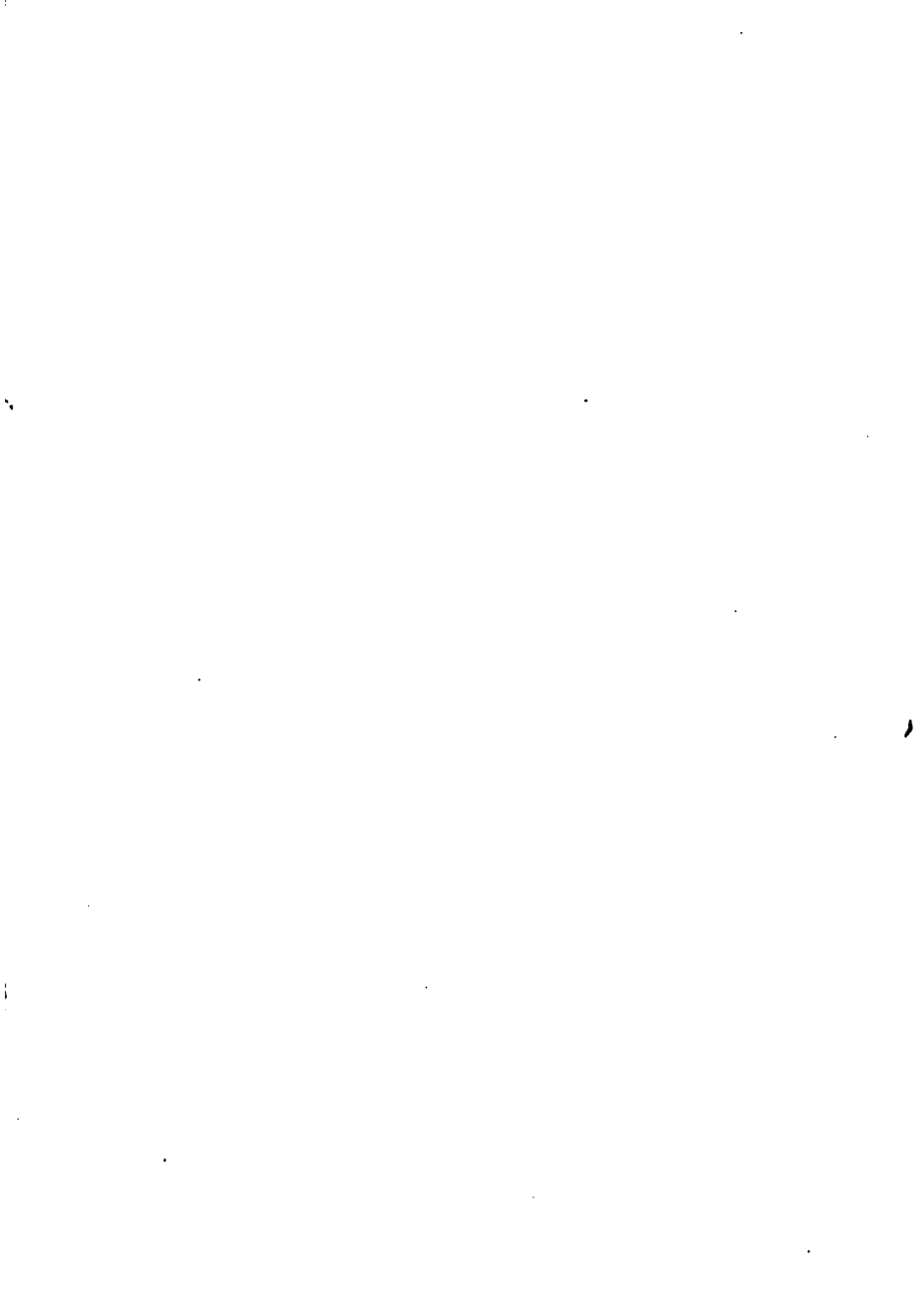
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Philosophy and Faith
of Universalism

Wm. D. D.
BY REV. FREDERICK W. BETTS, D. D.

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To my father, who is in heaven, the first Universalist I ever knew, who talked with me about these great things while I was yet a boy watching him work at his carpenter's bench.

PREFACE

One of the great pleasures of the intellectual life, and one of the great blessings of spiritual experience, is to think one's way and live one's way freely through great problems of existence. My life has been a very busy one. Ideas have been the tools of perpetual endeavor. By the fireside, in the pulpit, on the street, in the presence of the misery and tragedy of life, my great hopes have matured and my philosophy of life has been hammered into shape. Sermons have been little more than chips from my workshop. I have dared to choose great topics for my pulpit. And that I might discipline myself to think clearly on these great topics it has been my custom for many years to reduce the extemporaneous address to a written statement of a few hundred words. Many of these briefs have found their way into the editorial department of *The Universalist Leader*. There is no claim to originality or finality in them. They are simply glimpses at the way of thinking of one who has found in the faith outlined, a great joy. I do not pretend to be a philosopher, but if, after thirty years of it, one can truly say what I can truly say, that if I had it to do over I would walk this way and preach this Gospel over again, there must

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be some groundwork of great truth underneath. And to-day, facing the mystery of the world and the sorrows of life, I go forth with this guerdon next my heart, unconquerable in my confidence in righteousness and in God. If the reader is inclined to stumble over the literary defects and philosophic shortcomings of this little book, the instant answer is confession. And yet there are millions of men and women out there in the world who are waiting for some one who can make them understand that they have an eternal right to hope. If my crude translation of the living faith within me will only hearten and comfort them I shall be satisfied to let the angels take care of the rest.

F. W. BETTS.

Syracuse, N. Y.

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THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

PROFESSOR William James of Harvard University once said to a large audience whom he was addressing at Lowell Institute, Boston, that there is nothing else so interesting about men and women as their philosophy. Professor James was defending philosophy from the jibes of the superficial who call themselves "practical." He understood that "philosophy bakes no bread," but he also understood that there are many interesting things in human life besides baking bread. To him, with his trained mind and masterly psychological acumen, the processes of thought were more interesting than the processes of digestion or preparations for digestion. What he meant by philosophy as he used the word in that Lowell Institute address was a specific kind of philosophy. The word in its generic sense means literally the love of wisdom—"philo," love; "sophia," wisdom. Abstractly the word philosophy connotes "the general laws which furnish a rational explana-

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tion of anything." A philosopher is one who loves and searches for that wisdom which comprehends the rational understanding of things as a whole.

There is a philosophy of light, of heat, of sound, which transcends pure science, and seeks to explain these things by great general laws of matter and of energy. There is a philosophy of history, of society, of politics, of morality, of religion. In each instance philosophy means great general theories, or ideas, or truths which undertake to explain in large outlines the total of the phenomena included under any one of these heads. We may state the meaning of philosophy in another way. It is that final generalization, or those final generalizations, which are supposed to contain one's total impression of any department or part of creation. One's philosophy of history is one's largest and last and most inclusive idea of what history means. So also is one's philosophy of society, or politics, or morals, or religion. It is the final impression which either makes upon him as to its total meaning.

What Professor James meant when he said that the most interesting thing about people is their philosophy was that the most interesting fact in human experience or personality is one's interpretation of life. He was not thinking of politics or sociology. He was thinking of the men and women to whom he was speaking. As he looked into their faces he was con-

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scious that the most interesting thing about them was their philosophy, or explanation, or theory of their own lives.

Professor James might have gone farther. He might with truth have said that one's philosophy is not only the most interesting thing about him, or her, but it is also the most important thing in the make-up of anybody. For one's final interpretation of life is not a flag that flutters high up in the air over one's consciousness, and there shifted about by every wind. It is rather a fountain of life, a deep well, an exhaustless reservoir, which furnishes the very waters of life for the thirsty spirit. It is a dynamic energy which turns all the wheels of experience. It is a controlling idea which finally bends toward its center every faculty and every movement of personality. Given one's philosophy of life we have a magnet from which we may know that no word or deed or ideal will ever permanently break away. There may be eccentricity of orbit. Some passions and impulses may seem to move beyond the circle of ultimate ideas.

And yet, given one's philosophy of life we can determine the general character of the thoughts and words and deeds on through the coming years. This is illustrated by any number of personal examples. We have mixed these many years with a large group of ministers. Given any subject of vital importance brought to-day before that group we

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will guarantee beforehand to locate seventy-five per cent of those ministers upon the sides of that question where they will finally range themselves. There are any number of public men of whom we know in advance what attitude they will take toward any new issue in politics. So also of doctors, business men, farmers, union laborers, socialists, etc., to the end of the chapter.

All of which only means that one's settled interpretation or philosophy, of morals, medicine, politics or business is the important thing. It dominates our conduct, and our point of view concerning a multitude of little things which we ignorantly assume that we deal with without prejudice. The sum of the whole matter here is the reminder that our opinions concerning most things we meet in life are already formed, long before we are aware of what is going on in us. And the supremely important thing is that we begin with a philosophy of things as a whole. The first step in the formation of any wide, just judgment concerning anything which may come up in daily conduct is that we form a wise and just judgment concerning the whole meaning of life. When our philosophy is broad and sound, our decisions and judgments from day to day concerning the countless things which no wisdom can foresee will on the whole be noble and sensible. It is for lack of a sound philosophy of life as a whole that so many people deal with its details so unwisely.

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A FRIEND once visited in England a very wise and ripe old thinker, moralist and theologian. This friend, in a letter to *The Leader*, said that after the introduction the old man addressed him somewhat after this manner,—we recall from memory, but the substance of the thought is clear: “Well, you are a Universalist in theology, but what is your philosophy?” It is clear that this man wanted to know what explanation of life lay back of theology in the mind of his visitor. As we recall the reply of our friend, it was a substantial acknowledgement that he was not quite clear as to his philosophy of life back of his theology. How many of us are clear at this point? How many of us have thought out a clear philosophy of life on which to rest the great visions and ideals and convictions of our Christian faith? And yet this wise old man was simply pushing faith back to its source, back to its real source. He understood the true relationship of philosophy and theology.

Let us fix here, quite clearly, the true sequence of experience. Theology is the shadow cast by philosophy across the world and the abyss. We begin with a philosophy of life and we end with a theology. We

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develop an interpretation of the world and of life, and then we go on to construct a theory of the universe, of God, of divine providence, to fit our philosophy. We begin with conduct. We go on to thoughts about conduct. Then we formulate a theory of conduct. This theory of conduct becomes our interpretation of life. Our theories are seldom worthy of the name of philosophy. They are hit or miss, fragmentary, illogical, partial. They are growths, often unconscious growths. They are empirical, experimental. They are the results of the experience of one or another out of unnumbered billions of human beings. Our general human nature coordinates the infinite number of individual philosophies. Gradually we discover the tides beneath the ripples, the rocks beneath the disintegrated particles, the wide sweep of human life beyond the individual eccentricity.

Then out of our thoughts of the world or of life as a whole, we proceed to formulate an explanation of our life in God. This is our religion or our theology. It rests upon the total impression which life has made upon us. Of course our theology reacts upon our philosophy. Multitudes are so taught theology from their cradles that their theology warps experience, twists life out of the normal, distorts the impression which the total of life and experience would naturally make upon them, and produces at last a kind of person and an attitude toward creation which are monstrosi-

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ties. But the truth remains that the great school is the school of life. The great Teacher is creation. When day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge, the puny efforts of a stunted theology are in the long run impotent before the reconstructive power of life and experience.

The thought to be fixed permanently in our minds is that the one inexorable, certain way to modify theology is to work through experience and change one's interpretation of life. As we modify philosophy, we change and modify the shadow which philosophy casts across the abyss. Change our philosophy of life and theology will change itself.

It is here that we need subsoil work for faith. The supremely important thing is that we cultivate and develop an interpretation of life which in the totals of its length and breadth and height and depth, furnishes a foundation on which to rest that temple of our faith whose arching dome sweeps upward like the infinite sky. We need to address ourselves to the fundamentals more than to the ornamentals. The most beautiful vision of God and immortality that ever floated before a human soul is like the baseless fabric of a dream unless it floats upward from life and from reality. We must come back to earth. We must recall our beautiful hopes to the white light of facts. We must ask of human life, of history, of the world, if in their grand totals they justify such a

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splendid anticipation.

Here, and before we proceed with the story of philosophy and faith, let us inject the remark that we are in a more satisfactory situation for this work than our fathers were. They worked with poor tools. When John Murray dreamed his dream, the theology and philosophy of the Christian world furnished no sufficient foundation for his mighty hope. It is one of the miracles of thought, and a magnificent tribute to the prophetic chivalry of his faith, that with his single lance of idealism he ran a joust with mighty Calvinism.

Things have changed since Murray's day. Outside of Calvinism and Arminianism, outside of formal Christian logic, there has grown up a vast explanation of life which is accepted by most thinking men. This modern philosophy has crowded the ancient philosophies into a corner. In one form or another, even in the mental and moral processes of those who deny it, we find its masterful influence at work. In its deeper moods and nobler interpretations we find this modern philosophy furnishing a groundwork for our faith which is so wide and deep and solid that it only requires a steady purpose and noble effort on our part to build on it a confidence in the universe, in God, and in eternity, more magnificent than anything that has gone before. If with these later and larger ideas of life our faith does not flourish in the earth it will be

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because we who formulate it are inadequate. Life and philosophy today challenge us to harness them to our chariot of truth and faith that they may draw it on for us up to the feet of Everlasting Love.

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVES

THERE are but two possible philosophies of life, only two possible explanations of human existence. We are here. Where did we come from? How did we get here? What are we here for? Which way are we going? There are but two answers to this series of questions. We mean that there are only two possible rational explanations of the simple fact that *man is*. We are limiting this discussion to those who believe in the existence of God, and in mankind as in some way created by Him. Atheism may justly say that it is not consulted in what is going on just here. That is true, but it is true for the simple reason that Atheism bulks all its theories under one of the two philosophies which we are to describe and compare. These two philosophies, which include all special philosophies, can be designated by two words. One is the philosophy of Descent. The other is the philosophy of Ascent. One says man has come down from where he was once, to where he is now. The other says that man has come up from where he once was to where he is now. One says man has fallen. The other says man has risen. One says that through the wickedness of our first parents, or the weakness of the race, or our own individual weak-

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ness, the history of humanity is like the history of a plant whose root dries up and whose leaf withers and whose blossoms fade. The other says that in spite of all weaknesses, whether racial or individual, man is like a seed cast into the soil. Little, obscure at first, he has deepened his root, widened his branches, grown to greater and greater strength. The philosophy of descent puts creation in the past tense. It says that *man was made*. The philosophy of ascent puts creation into all tenses, past, present, future. It says that man is being made. The philosophy of descent sees the perfect specimen at the beginning of the series. The philosophy of ascent sees the perfect specimen at the end of the series. Behind one series is an angel and an Eden from which mankind has been driven by its own vicious curiosity. Behind the other series is an animal and a cave, which mankind has outgrown by the inherent propulsion of vital processes of development.

There is a third alternative which is proposed by those who are timid about choosing definitely between the philosophies of descent and ascent. This third explanation of life is like most compromises. It is a makeshift. It is a process of sophisticated casuistry. It is illogical, self-contradictory. It proposes to mediate between two opposite and contradictory explanations of life. It says that in the beginning man was made perfect. He almost immediately fell down

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into the mire. From the period of his great slump until now man has been climbing up. Here is an instance where the pseudo-scientific mind recognizes the force of the ascending tendency of mankind, and tries to square this process with the traditional assumption which underlies all traditional theologies. How or why a being whose first and fundamental instinct was to fall down should spend himself through long epochs in trying to climb up, is nowhere explained. This compromise theory is simply one step in the process of a change of base. It bears testimony to the pressure of the idea of life as a growth and a development, even upon the minds of those who will not or cannot give up the traditional explanation of human nature and its history. Therefore we must ignore this double-headed philosophy of life. It is a transient mood through which thought passes from an old world to a new one.

The fact remains, therefore, that we must choose between two fundamentally contradictory explanations of how man has arrived. His history is one long decline, lapse, descent, decay, slump, or it is one long climb, advance, ascent. Man began high up and is ending lower down, or he began low down and is ending higher up. Between these two ideas there is no agreement, no common ground, no compromise. At bottom we must be Creationists or Evolutionists; we cannot be both in any sense which is

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not a confusion of tongues which indicates a confusion of ideas greater than that of the traditional Babel. The best cannot be behind us *and* before us. One can not go up *and* down at the same time. Black is not white. Morning is not evening. East is not west. And the sooner we fix these points of compass in our rational processes of thought, and in our interpretation of life, the better it will be for the consistency and force with which we will apply our philosophy of life to our daily conduct. For while philosophy bakes no bread, it does assist tremendously in baking the cake of character.

FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

WHEN we select our fundamental philosophy of life we take home with it a lot of things not itemized in the account. Emerson wrote that when he purchased his home in Concord he took title to many things not enumerated in the deed. There was the wide meadow across the way. Beyond the meadow was the silver ribbon of the little river. Still farther rose Monadnock's crown. And still beyond the meadow, river and mountain-top arched the blue sky and the stars overhead. All these came with the little plot of land and the old, square house beside the road. When Emerson settled at Concord he fixed his angles and point of view from whence, henceforth, so long as he remained there, he must look upon the details of creation.

What Emerson did bodily at Concord we all do intellectually when we settle down somewhere in the world of ideas. A fundamental theory of life fixes our point of view. From its angle we look upon every detail of experience. When we accept a primary explanation of life as a whole we must carry home with us all that goes with that explanation. Any philosophy of life involves an acceptance of all the infer-

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ences, consequences, and corollaries of that philosophy. Let us apply this plain reasoning to that issue which is absolutely primary in all experience. We have said that there are but two possible philosophies of life. We have designated these two philosophies of life as the philosophy of Ascent and the philosophy of Descent. We have explained these two philosophies. One says that the history of man from the beginning has been a long decline, descent, decay, slump from a former high estate. The other says that the history of man has been one long climb, ascent, advance, from a former low estate. Those two definitions represent two theories of life under which we must finally classify every fact of human history. The one we accept as true involves us in the necessity of seeing every fact of history from its point of view.

Let us take the philosophy of descent and see where it lands us. If we accept the idea that from the beginning man has come down, deteriorated, we assume a certain fundamental drift in things. This drift is present in nature and in human nature. It operates in man, and it operates on man through his environment. Matter is evil. The world pulls man down. He himself is a willing partner in his own degradation. He likes to be pulled own. He is naturally satisfied only when he is being pulled own. Therefore, so far as nature and human nature are concerned they are boon companions on the way to the ditch. It is

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another case of the Titanic. Things are steering straight for the iceburgs or the rocks. In the end, left to themselves, the whole world process and all things therein have no recuperative powers. All is wrong, and getting farther wrong every day. The only possible cure is an upset and overturning of the whole order and sweep of things, as we see them in the world and in human life to-day.

Perhaps the most uncompromising apostle of the descending philosophy of life which our generation has produced is Max Nordeau, author of "Degeneration." Among the curious books in our library is one which Max Nordeau wrote, and which we obtained long before he became famous as the author of his later works. The title of our curious book is "Conventional Lies." These "Conventional Lies," as given in titles to the chapters of the book, are "The Lie of Monarchy and Aristocracy," "The Political Lie," "The Economic Lie," "The Matrimonial Lie," "Miscellaneous Lies." The substance of the indictment of this book is that all our great social institutions, which represent the accumulated experience of mankind, are rotten, and must be swept away to make room for the coming age.

We quote Nordeau in order to make it clear that the philosophy of descent and slump is not primarily theological. Its most aggressive advocates during the last century have been powerful thinkers to whom all

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theological things were repulsive. From Schopenhauer to Nietzsche and Nordau the last century has witnessed the growth of a philosophy of pessimism and despair among scholars and thinkers whose minds move in orbits entirely outside what we call Christian thought. Curiously enough, a way of looking at life which has been worked over, exhausted, and is being set aside by the Christian world, is being exploited by powerful minds which deliberately repudiate the Christian point of view. We refer to these men and their writings in order to make clear the tremendous significance to every human mind of that philosophy of life which it accepts as fundamental. Unfortunately very few people reason down to foundations, and thence out to far conclusions. Theories of life as a whole are formed, like habits, before we are aware of the fact. And then, alas, the supreme struggle of life is to get rid of the habit or the philosophy, if it is a bad one.

THE PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY OF DEGENERATION

IN ONE form or another the philosophy of decadence and degeneration underlies all conventional theologies. Here is the story in brief. In some way the history of mankind is a story of decline, descent. Some say this is because our first parents sinned. Some say it is because the inherent tendency to descend is a racial trait. Some say the fault lies in our individual propensity to do wrong. And some say that all of these aspects of the situation are parts of one universal element of wrongheadedness which is racial and universal. The moderate form of this idea is that of a general disposition toward evil. Its extreme form is the doctrine of total depravity. Whatever the explanation, the fact is that the world is on the down grade. As surely as gravity pulls, so surely the wickedness in men's souls drags history down. The end thereof is easily foreseen. The doom of humanity is the goal. Death is a curse pronounced upon all men, as the result of sin. Beyond death yawns the abyss. All this is in the nature of things as they are. It is like the tides of a sea or the swirl of a whirlpool. Everything is sucked into the vortex at last, unless some one interferes to avert the impending

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doom. Here is the business of Religion. Its function is that of interference.

Let us see just what this means. We are using the widest possible generalizations. We are defining those fundamental characteristics without which religion would not be religion in any sense that is vital to the great mass of believers. Behind every variety of conventional theology the world and humanity are like the great ship Titanic. They may look well, be built on a grand scale, and appear magnificent, but they are on the way to the bottom. Religion is the Carpathia, the life-boats, the rafts, the whole wrecking and salvage system which rescues those who leave the ship before it sinks. Religion is a system for saving individuals from the mass. These are to be gathered up and carried off while the multitude sink. "Plucked like brands from the burning" is another figure of speech which purports to illustrate how religion operates.

About when and where and how the process of separation and selection of the saved is made there are various answers. The priests say that the Church, through its sacraments, is forever carrying on the process of separation. Baptism is the sign of redemption with many. This baptism takes the form of complete immersion with the extremists. Acceptance of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ is quite commonly believed to be a guarantee of salvation. To be "born

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again" is the supreme certificate to heaven with not a few sects. In an ancient New England burying-ground the garrulous old sexton points out to visitors the plot where the bodies of unbaptized infants were buried. All these were supposed to be damned. More than one-half of Christendom draws this line between the saved and the unsaved, even now. We recall quite vividly a discussion which was carried on in a denominational weekly of the church in which we were baptized. It was many years ago, but in thought it is farther away than it is in years. Learned divines argued pro and con with sober faces whether those two great heathens, Socrates and Seneca, could be saved out of all that great multitude of "the lost heathen world."

The purpose of these words is not to revive any ancient animosities, nor to drag from their graves the skeletons of those ancient bigotries or conceits. It is one of the signs of our better day that such crude notions of the world and of history seem so far away. But there is a fact to be remembered here. Those harsh and narrow notions about who are saved have been veneered and polished until they shine with a fresh luster. Behind every door where Christians confer they are under suspicion. Still we ask in all earnestness what Church, what sect which once held them to be true, has plainly and candidly repudiated them? A friend of one of our really great modern preachers

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has said of him that he carefully dresses up the old ideas so that they will not repulse the people who listen to him. So far as we know, and granting all that can be said by those who declare that the old ideas are not preached now, the truth remains that the old ideas remain undisturbed in the creeds and rituals of Christendom. And when driven to the wall, and urged to assist anxious souls, the average preacher of to-day falls back upon the same old philosophy of life which underlies the ancient bigotries.

These words are set down in kindness. There are dear friends of ours in those old fellowships. There are individual ministers who repudiate that whole interpretation of life and that whole conception of religion which considers it as a salvage crew. But to-day the only theology and the only philosophy of life which conventional religion has, so far as it has any philosophy, is that interpretation of life which says that in its bulk and grand total it is decadent. And the real business of religion as understood by the vast majority of its apologists and defenders is to save what can be saved from the impending disasters which are certain to overtake humanity in the end unless the whole course of history is reversed.

It is in contrast with all this that we propose to explain the philosophy of Universalism.

THE MAN ON HIS KNEES

WHOEVER has examined carefully the philosophy of life and history on which all the conventional theologies rest will not find it difficult to understand why the Christian Church as a whole finds it so difficult to adjust itself to the demands of the social conscience of our times. We have just read a severe indictment of the Church drawn by one of the noblest women of our time, Jane Addams. She says that "the attitude of the Church toward the social evil is eminently irreligious." In a gathering of ministers called for the purpose of trying to find out what they could do to stay this same evil it was the most orthodox among them who thought that the ministers were going beyond their legitimate field of work. The Roman Catholic Church has set its face like a flint against the social radicalism of our times. If Jane Addams is as careful a student of the philosophy of religion as she is of the social problems of our day, she will discover that there is less of hypocrisy than of unconscious bias in the church, concerning all social evils.

The Church as a whole does not yet believe in the moral and spiritual solvency of society. The pietist and the cynic are agreed that it is a very bad mess,

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and that there is little hope of cleansing the whole lump of society. The cynic says, "let it alone, you cannot cure the evil." The pietist says, "I cannot regenerate that mass of corruption. I can save a few souls out of the mass." Here is the profound influence of the ancient suspicion of religion in its attitude toward the world. Pietism has never believed in the salvability of society as a whole. It does not expect that the whole length and breadth of world life will ever be righteous. Its whole theory of its own function is to select, separate, baptize, convert, individuals. These are to become members of its group, and thus within the world, separated from the world, the society of the redeemed will be organized. Therefore the traditional conception of religion is mortgaged to individualism in its policy. It is honest, earnest, conscientious when it replies to the indictment of Jane Adams and others like her with a mild or emphatic protest. To the traditionalist and pietist in religion there is nothing more fanciful and unpractical and dangerous than this modern tendency to neglect the ordinances of the Church and go forth upon this knight errantry of social salvation. To these there is only one salvation possible. This salvation has its signs and trademarks. Any diffusing, leavening, spiritualizing process, outside the orderly ministrations of a Church or faith which takes the soul out of the world and sets it on "the rock of the redemption of Jesus

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Christ," is only the mist of the morning, or the fog that obscures the mountains of God.

Therefore we insist that the difficulty of adjusting the Church to the world of to-day, and the problem of the attitude of the Church toward social evils, is really a problem of the fundamental philosophy of life and of religion itself. This is not saying that we may not hope for real help in solving social problems from those who stand in the traditional ways of theology. Noble men and women are magnificently inconsistent. Great things may be born in Bethlehem and come out of Nazareth. But there is a more vital question. The demand is for the Church to make its venture of faith to-day. The call is for the Church to consecrate itself to the solution of great social problems. The pleading is that of the victims of greed and of lust who cry to this mighty organization of good men and women to come and rescue them from hell. It is the world shouting in the ears of the man on his knees praying for the kingdom to come, that he may get up, stretch himself, and come forth to help renovate the world.

And the man on his knees, at his prayers, has been so long taught that the old world is a wicked old scamp, that he is really afraid to come out and help him. He does not quite believe him. In his heart of hearts he is suspicious that it was the devil who interfered with his devotions. Now, if this man on his knees is ever to throw himself into the struggle to

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which the world invites him, his whole point of view must be changed. He must be persuaded that the old philosophy of life which was handed down to him is a grievous mistake. He must be convinced that the providence of God calls him to forget himself, and come out of his closet, and throw himself into this struggle for social regeneration. The real difficulty with this man on his knees is not that he is a hypocrite, nor yet that he is morally indifferent. His difficulty is that he inherits a theory of life which teaches him every day, morning, noon and evening, that his business is to thank God that he is not as other men are, and to make that saying true to life. The fundamental necessity is to put into his soul, in place of this spiritual self-congratulation, that other humble petition, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and to make that petition true to life in his fellowship with humanity.

That man on his knees is the incarnation of the Church. What must be done to him and in him in order to fit him for a mighty devotion to humanity must be done for the Church in order to fit it for the call of the world to-day. The man on his knees, and the Church which he represents, must be born again into a nobler philosophy of life.

THE TIDES OF HISTORY

WE HAVE described in previous chapters that philosophy of life which sees everywhere decadence and degeneration. We have described that fundamental theory of religion which conceives of it as a rescue or salvage system which tries to save some of this perishing humanity. We have pointed out the fundamental individualism of all such conceptions of religion. We have explained why this individualistic philosophy of religion, based upon a theory of degeneration in the world, finds it almost impossible to adapt itself to those great ideals of social salvation which are rising in the social consciousness of our day. We have urged that this whole philosophy of decadence, and this entire conception of religion as a salvage system of saving a few from the wreck of life, must be set aside before the Church can cast in its lot with humanity in this great struggle for social regeneration. And we have stated that this individualistic, salvage-system idea of religion, and this philosophy of human decadence, still lie undisturbed in the creeds and rituals and practices of most of Christendom.

The next step in this discussion must be a clear and emphatic description of the attitude of Universalist thought toward these fundamental conceptions of life

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and of religion. When we undertake this definition we are reminded of the gentler spirit of our times. We are reminded also of the repeated admonition which we hear from the brethren, that we must not say anything which will offend or hurt our friends in other churches. We rejoice in this spirit. We practice this injunction. But even here candor and frankness are the only true paths to Christian fellowship. There are still convictions and ideals worth living or dying for. There are hopes and aspirations which no one has a right to compromise. The issue between Universalism and traditionalism in religion is so fundamental, so vital, so important, that we are going to set it down here so simply and clearly that no friend and no honest critic of our faith can possibly misunderstand us.

The issue between Universalism and traditionalism in religion rests upon a comparison of those two philosophies of life which we said at the beginning were the only possible philosophies of life. These two philosophies of life we described as the philosophy of Descent and the philosophy of Ascent. Concerning these Universalism disagrees absolutely with traditionalism, for Universalism rejects and repudiates, without equivocation, condition or cavil, from beginning to end, from top to bottom, from center to circumference, from initial assumption to final inference, every scrap and every argument of the philosophy of

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Descent. And just as inclusively, absolutely, universally, Universalism accepts the philosophy of the Ascent of man.

It has often been charged that Universalism is a faith of one idea or ideal. We ourselves have sometimes blunderingly urged our great hope without making it clear that this hope is an inference drawn from our whole philosophy of life. The great truth, which is sometimes obscured in our own minds and almost always obscured in the minds of those who criticise Universalism as a "death and glory" dream, is that this dream is a vision of prophetic life which arches our whole interpretation of the world and of history. Universalism is the logical outcome of the idea that by nature man is a climber. Here is the story in brief. From the beginning man has been a dreamer, a visionary. His essential nature is to aspire, to desire. Physically he is a growing organism. Intellectually he is always curious. Morally he is an idealist. Spiritually he is hungry for the Infinite. He is a being of perpetual unrest. His history is one great epoch of stumbling upward. He was born for trouble as sparks fly upward. The long ages are one cry of travail pain. Always the higher and better is struggling to be born. In all this he is conforming to type. History is the uncovering of the heredity and endowment of human nature. There is an infinite necessity through it all. The laws of life in man are as certain

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as the laws of life in a rose or a tree or a planet. They are more complex in man but they are none the less inexorable.

Any scheme, any program, any religion which in the long run and in the grand total of its activities contradicts or seeks to defeat the fundamental tendencies of human nature is doomed itself to defeat. The reason why organized religion is so often driven into a corner, and out of the path of the great progressive movements of history, is because religion does too often strive to defeat and turn back the great hopes of society and humanity. The fundamental philosophy of life accepted by traditionalism in religion is certain to defeat itself in the sequel. When we hear pietists mourn and protest because masses of men ignore their pleadings let us remember that pietism and traditionalism begin by discrediting the motives and inspirations of the multitude. At this moment the greatest Church in Christendom, under the unconscious bias of the ancient superstition of decadent life, is repeating the old, old blunder. It is trying to defeat the profoundest movement of the human spirit of our day. It does not hope to guide. Its last word is an emphatic, angry protest. Thus does history revenge itself. To-morrow is as certain to witness the failure of that protest as yesterday is ready to testify that such protests have left the Church to one side while the world went on toward liberty.

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Over against all this Universalism takes its stand on the moral consciousness of humanity. It understands the mistakes of history. It has no illusions as to the struggles involved. But it rests its whole case and its great hope on the total of human achievement as this is revealed in history, as against every theory of life and redemption which rests upon the ultimate defeat of the elemental and eternal impulses and aspirations of the human race. It goes with man, rather than against him, on toward the goal. It throws itself into the ocean of history with absolute confidence that its tides will bear the vessel of its hopes out toward God.



HISTORIC FOUNDATIONS OF THE UNIVERSALIST FAITH

AT this point in our study of the philosophy and faith of Universalism it will be wise to pause long enough to describe the sources of our confidence in the ascent of man. What is our justification for the belief that innately, naturally, fundamentally man is a climber? To what specific facts can we point to establish the actual historic process of ascent? It is vitally important that we consider these questions. So much of moral argument is in the air, so much of theological speculation never touches even the hem of the garment of real life, that many good people smile good-naturedly whenever theology is mentioned. It is, therefore, necessary that we ask if there is a solid rock of reality in history and human life on which to build so high a tower of faith as Universalism outlines. Again, most of our thinking is "scrappy," fragmentary, local. It lacks the proportions of the general or universal. It is neighborhood gossip rather than cosmic reasoning. Any outline of history which is broad enough and fundamental enough to furnish a foundation for a great faith must sweep the whole range of human activities, and include all stages of progress. Therefore, it is only possible to

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sketch the large outlines of the historic process which justifies the confidence of Universalism in the ascent of man. This is an article for suggestion. The reader will find whole libraries devoted to the story. It must suffice here to point to the problems involved.

And, again, we wish to disavow any claim to infallibility. Perhaps this is unnecessary, but our reading of history has so rooted and grounded us in the philosophy of life here described that sometimes dogmatic affirmations concerning it get in even between the lines of what we write. This, then, is the story as it unfolds in the consciousness of those who have absorbed the ascending philosophy of history into their very blood. History is a seamless robe, woven of many threads in the loom of time. The different sciences which deal with phases of past human experience are only different glimpses at one human spirit which is in all. Philology is the science of language. Already its masters tell us that they have reduced the fundamental concepts from which all language proceeds to a very few hundred, if not less than one hundred. It is from these few concepts that all our great wealth of human thought and speech have grown since alphabets were invented. Ceramics is the science of pottery. It traces for us the story of vessel-making from clay. From the baked mud of a prehistoric jar to the finest piece of modern porcelain the progress is unbroken. The history of invention

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begins with a fishhook or a bow and arrow, and is not ended yet even with our splendid tools of industry.

Family life began very crude and is still unfolding. Government began with a club, and is still going on toward higher ethical principles. Jurisprudence is a perpetual revelation of the growth of justice in the mind of man. Morality has come a long distance from the wigwam and the savage passions of even our own Northmen ancestors. Nowhere is the story of the ascent of man more clearly traced than in the history of religion itself. From dreadful fears, from human sacrifice to the gods, we have come a long distance in order to discover the Eternal Goodness of whom the poet sings. All peoples are involved in this vast process. There are broken threads in the loom. There are eddies among the great tides of history. Here or there an individual or a group shirks and tries to lag. There are spots on the earth where progress seems to have halted in its long and tiresome march. Pessimists point to these facts as discrediting our hopes. But the end of the historic process is not yet. The Modern spirit has transformed Japan. It is transforming China. The leaven of it is in India, Persia, Turkey, in all nations, and unto the uttermost isles of the sea. The Boxers cannot turn the new age out of doors. A little farther on we shall discover ancient peoples dragged on at the wheels of the chariot, even though it be as unwilling slaves of these conquering

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ideas. Soon or late, first or last, all peoples are swept into the vortex, and onward with the ascending soul of man. Even the drone is in the mass.

If we may change the figure to an army, we will say that there are left wings and right wings,—there are vanguards and rearguards, but as the miles are marked off and the stations of advance are passed we discover that all are moving at about the same rate of speed. Some rush ahead, some lag, but all are under the same momentum. Nothing is lost. Even those who fell by the way have made their contribution to that grand total which is history. The torch they dropped is grasped by other hands. The dream that passed with them floated upward into other souls. Innocence, ignorance, bigotry, along with wisdom, and virtue, and wide world sympathy, all pulled onward the wheels of progress. The worst man and the best man both added to the influences which swept humanity on. There is no separating the strands of life. It is only when we see it whole, and look at it as one world process, that we feel the thrill of omnipotent energy through it all. It is only when we totalize it, and measure the distance it has come by the laws of general averages, that we comprehend how wide and deep in the history of humanity are laid the foundations of those promises and prophecies which justify our Universalist faith in the ascent of man.

MAN AND THE WORLD

THIS fundamental issue between the Universalist philosophy of life and the traditional philosophy of degeneration, extends to that world outside of consciousness which we call nature. Man is part of nature. Whatever he may be spiritually, physically he belongs to material creation. His body is made of dust. His organism is the product of the same physical laws which control the growth of other vertebrate animals. By all his senses man is related to the material world about him. He influences that material world but slightly, but it influences him enormously. The traditional philosophy declares that the total effect of nature upon man, through his physical senses, is depressing. It forever drags him down toward sensual experience. It is at war with the spiritual life. Thus the supreme necessity of the spiritual nature is to unloose itself from the influence of the material creation in which it finds itself.

To all this Universalism answers that it is a narrow and one-sided conception of the relations between man and nature. Nature as a whole does not drag men down. The senses are not evil. Sensuality is an exaggeration of the normal play of physical faculties. Man and nature are inseparable. They are

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under one law. Nature does not hinder spiritual growth. On the contrary, in man's struggle for a higher life she has been his handmaiden. She has called to him to follow her at every step. It was Dante who wrote of "The poetic soul of the wide world, dreaming of things to come." It was Paul who declared that the whole creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. By the push and the pull of the world man has climbed up over many barriers. Nature has been lavish with her resources. He has created nothing. At every step nature has revealed to him some new resource which is at his command. Even now she is whispering in his soul hints of greater things which she will reveal to him. The story of the progress of man is the history of his growing intimacy with this great mother earth which has brooded him. It is through obedience to her that he conquers. Under and through and by her laws he constantly extends his influence.

And it is great nature that educates man in the fundamentals of his own spiritual nature. It is nature that wraps him about with her processes of cause and effect, of compensation. At her feet he learns that men get what they give, gather what they scatter, harvest what they sow. Here man has been a slow learner. Nature has been a hard moral taskmaster. Sometimes she has been so silent and unprotesting that he has taken this silence for consent. But

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always in the sequel he has found that she has never slept, never agreed to abrogate compensation. Slowly his own crude experience has ripened under her discipline, until he is now building on her foundations a universe of law under which men are being developed into harmony with that changeless Will of which these natural laws are but the expression.

Here, then, is the vision of a world process which includes man. Creation is one synthesis of energies which all press and push and move toward a more perfect expression of the one infinite Life which is in and through all. Through the underbrush of his own passions and impulses man is pushing his way out where the stars shine. He feels himself a part of this world process. He becomes ever more conscious that the whole panorama of changing circumstances is permeated by a purpose and a process as vast, deep, mysterious and beautiful as the space which holds the clouds and stars. He learns to put his trust in the universe. He feels its stability beneath his feet. He feels its justice when it scourges him. He has inklings of its mercy when he is trodden under foot by his fellow men. Constantly as the ages pass he looks unto the hills from whence cometh his help. He learns to no longer fear the dark. He walks in closer sympathy with bird and beast. He relies on springtime and harvest. He understands that nature is his mother, his sister, his friend. He stands at last with bared

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head, with some glinting, glimmering vision of the glory and the grandeur of it all, beating into his very soul like the light of the day or that other light which never was on land or sea. And by this inward light, this light of faith in all the works of God, he makes his way through the mazes of life toward the edge of the world where the infinite sea begins.

THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD

WE COME now to that mount of observation from whence we see the whole world, with man included, lying like a great globe beneath the arching skies of the purposes of God. And now we can understand what Maurice, and Kingsley and Frederick Robertson tried to make the world understand fifty years ago. What Freemantle and Briggs and Robertson Smith have tried to teach our generation out of the wisdom of their great souls. In their magnificent pleas for the moral solidarity of society Maurice and Kingsley and Robertson were prophets whose cry echoes in the books of these later scholars. They felt the heart-beat of humanity. They swept away every barrier in order to make men understand the interior and ultimate unity of spirit which is in the human race. They passed over in sympathy from an old to a new world of Christian ideals. They prepared the Christian consciousness for the magnificent proposition of Freemantle that it is the world that is subject for redemption, and for the statement of Briggs that the salvation of the Bible is the salvation of the world.

Perhaps not one of these men would accept all of the implications of their ideas as they appeal to Universalists. Perhaps not one of them had worked out a

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philosophy of life which sets aside entirely the traditional philosophy. Neither did Luther work out the fundamental implications of his own revolution. It has taken four centuries to do this, and it is still in the process. It is only as we stand squarely on that interpretation of life which is fundamental in the philosophy of Universalism that we can see all that is included in this transfer of the emphasis and idea of salvation from the individual to the world. Salvation is nowhere an individual process. There is no more hope of individual salvation than there is hope of one being able to jump off the earth. The world, mankind, the spiritual processes of creation, hold each individual atom in place as certainly as gravitation holds the grains of sands in the dune on the beach. Sooner or later all is shot through by one process. One rises a little above it, as birds fly in the air. Another sinks a little below it, as fishes dive to the ocean's bed. But fish and bird, man and mankind, all move within the orbit of life where all live. Soon or late, first or last, the bird of the noblest flight must light. As the world moves so it moves. Even above, the atmosphere is too rare for the beating of its wings, and it must come back to earth at last.

Redemption is a leaven, a spirit in things. It is indefinite, potential, inclusive. It transforms the whole lump or none. The Kingdom is to come as light floods the earth. Some mountain-tops will see

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its glory first. Some valleys lie in shade far into the day. But the darkness is a shadow which retreats everywhere or nowhere. He that seeks to save his own life loses it. Only he who saves the world can save himself. Only as the mass is leavened can a single particle be truly leavened. We have yet to read understandingly many of the finest sayings of the Master. When we do read them understandingly we shall be amazed at his philosophic grasp of life and history. It is only as we put behind his simple, gracious words these mighty conceptions of the world process, that we can possibly understand how great an interpreter of eternal truth this Galilean was.

We do see how great and true his thought was, when we stand off and look at history. For we discover that no innocence, no purity, no nobleness, can save the individual from the common fate of his people and his race. There were brave men and virtuous women in the Rome of Nero's day. There were thousands of liberty loving people in the South in 1860. But the curse of Nero's reign fell on all alike. The fearful ravages of war scourged the whole South. The hamlets of Vermont and Maine, the cross-roads of Alabama and Texas, all felt the sting and pain and sorrow of the conflict. In every crisis, in ever tragedy, all lines are wiped out, all are engulfed in the calamity. When one lifts the banner of a great cause he carries it for the world. When one plays the coward all the

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world is depressed. We are on the ship. If it makes port all who sail in it will make port. If it sinks all who remain on it will sink. Not even a wireless telegraphy can save a single soul when the world collapses. By the laws of life, of nature, of creation, by the whole sweep of eternal energies, we are all being carried forward in an orbit so vast that in its sweep all petty differences are but throbbings of the machinery which sweeps the whole along.

It is this world-consciousness of the process of redemption that is the true basis of our faith in the outcome of the purposes of God in the far cycles of the everlasting years.

THE PROPHETS OF THE SOUL

IF MAN is a climber by nature, if by his own deepest instincts he is drawn and driven upward toward spiritual life and truth, of what use is religion? If left to himself man is certain to grow in the direction of righteousness and God, what need has he for that regeneration which religion proclaims? It is when we seek answers to these questions that we discover that nobler conception of religion which is the corollary of the philosophy of the ascent of man. Man is intellectually curious. His mind instinctively seeks truth. Then why have schools for him? Why establish great systems of education? The old idea of religion as something which is to make over the nature of man was assumed by most believers. When that idea is given up the believers wonder what work there is for religion. The answer is that there is as great work for religion under the new dispensation as there is for education. Suppose man is so constituted that he must climb, that he must seek spiritual life and truth, that he must follow Abraham in search of a city whose builder and maker is God. The search is a long and tiresome one. Sometimes the way is very rough. Always the lands and seas that way are uncharted. Each soul must be a pioneer. There are rivers to cross,

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mountains to scale, forests to penetrate. How often men need those who can hearten and encourage them. Here is one who has travelled that way. He is strong of will, great of heart, mighty of faith. He stands by the way of life and points the true direction. He lifts his voice in ringing words of good cheer. He tells what he has seen and what he knows. He shouts his challenge to all the wild beasts and the wilder tempests which threaten the discouraged traveller. He is the prophet and the seer. He appeals to emotions already in action. He directs energy already powerful. He deepens convictions already in formation. He foretells a goal toward which all the nobler powers in man are already moving.

Slowly and laboriously man learns the great lessons of life. Through bitter tears he sometimes makes his way. There are hours of great darkness, times of humiliating defeat. He is wounded and sore. He is heart-broken and discouraged. Regret and remorse sting him with their goads. Miserable doubts assail him. He wonders if there is a goal. "Is God dead?" his soul cries out in despair. The world is so vast a mystery, life seems such a tragedy, his own self-condemnation is often so intense, that great shadows fall across his path. The Hidden Presence becomes terrible. Man is afraid of the dark. How terrible it would be to meet the Presence suddenly. Fear creates its nightmare of dread. False prophets become attor-

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neys of the adversary. They picture the Unseen, the Eternal, as angry, severe, exacting. They demand of the terror stricken soul a deeper depth of agony and repentance.

Then comes the great prophet, the Man of Galilee, and in words so gracious and tender that they are like balm, he reassures the burdened and anxious hearts. How different the story seems as he tells it. How wonderful the transformation of life under the touch of his fine thoughts. He is the child of all the ancient seers. He has felt the thrill of their hopes. He lifts the torch of truth they held, and makes it flame with larger light. Over and over again, in proverb and parable, in precept and story, he tries to beat into the dull understanding of the crowd who follow him his own great thoughts of life and of God. Standing in the simple beauty of his daily ministry of life he told them again and again to think of God as they thought of him. He urged them to put away the old superstitions and fears, and turn to their Father for mercy and strength. What strikes the Universalist in all this is its absolute naturalness. It is all so true to life, all so real, all so appealing. It is the crowning fact in the ascent of man. For this all the prophets have taught. While it is ideal it is the ideal which grows like a sweet scented blossom upon the whole growth of life. It is the flowering of nature, the spring-time of spirit, the fulfillment of those anticipations and intimations

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which have stirred in the soul of the world since the dawn of history.

Religion, then, is not a thing apart from life. It is not a propaganda. It is not a system of worship, nor an agency for turning the world upside down. Religion is life, the best life. It is man's noblest breath, his highest inspiration, his final and complete synthesis. It is his consciousness of his life in God. It is the sweep and the pull of his nature toward things holy and divine. It is himself a person in communion with other men, nature, and the Unseen. It is more than great thoughts, more than tender emotions, more than the will to believe and do. It is the grand total of these all, embodied in life. In himself, by his original heredity, through the processes of all his growth, man ripens in spiritual things as grapes on vines turn to the wine, as acorns become oaks, as seed-time and harvest come round. His soul and the Soul of the world are one, and his days and his years bring him nearer and nearer the heart of all things.

THE BEST AND THE WORST

AS WE approach the climax of our Universalist way of thinking about life, we come face to face with great problems which cause us to stand in awe before the ways of God. From one point of view the story of our Master is a trial to our faith. Here was one most beautiful in life, most innocent in death. He never knowingly wronged any man. His only desire was to lift men to a nobler life. Here is one who has climbed to the top. He is man, *made*, not in the making. From this one all the meaning of life in the past takes on a deeper meaning. Here the struggle and tears become vision and faith and peace. This is the image of God, sown in the soul of the race in Eden's song of the past. All has come true. The Godlike appears. The Master of men is the servant of all.

And then the sequel of hatred and persecution. He, too, must die on a cross, between two thieves. He is no better than they in his fate. All his goodness avails not one whit. Innocence is slain by harsh and ugly prejudice. This great soul must pay the penalty of death for the sins of other men. This is the law. It is the law everywhere. The best and the worst are inseparable. The wheat and the tares grow together

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in life. Here is the atonement of love. Always and ever it is the same. From it no life is exempt. From it no one can escape. Ever the best must die for the worst. Ever the innocent bears the wounds of the guilty, in body and soul. On every page of history, on every cross-roads of the world, that law is at work. From the great steamer lost at sea by the blunder of one man, to the martyrdom of peoples sacrificed for the crimes of kings, all the face of the earth tells its story of those who have suffered and died for the mistakes and the blunders of others.

This is God's solidarity. This is the rock of our faith. While we contemplate it with awe we see in this law the hope of the world, the pledge of the process which carries all on the way to the goal. The wounds of the guilty are healed by the stripes on the innocent. Strange and wonderful the process. The good man moves this way, the bad man moves that way. But the world is round. Always the good man feels the pull of the bad man. The farther apart in conduct, the closer in sympathy. As the good man climbs up he must reach down or fall down. Did he go up alone, and not reach down by sympathy which guarantees his hurt, his goodness would curdle, the springs of his soul would dry up, his heart would be as the devil's might be if there were such demons abroad, with such hardness of heart,

This is the way it works as the world goes on.

THE BEST AND THE WORST

Every atom of goodness becomes energy for lifting the world. Every kind thought, every high emotion, every increase of spiritual life, by its nature reacts, and forces the one who attains it to use it for all. At any moment all that is fine, true and noble in life is pulling and dragging humanity up.

We find here the secret of the peace of our Master, the peace which he promises to us. There is but one peace, real peace, in the world. This peace is not as the world thinks of peace. Jesus found his peace in the toil and the sorrows of men. He won his peace in the midst of strife. He never found the placidity of outward content. He toiled at his task so long as he lived. But he found peace in toil. He found the rest that is in God. There is no content under the stars like that which comes in high endeavor. It is only as men give themselves to some noble task which engages all of their faculties that they fathom the meaning of what Christ felt. There are lives all outward storm, all inward peace. There are men and women whom the world has buffeted constantly, who are never disturbed within. Here is a woman whose letter came a few days ago. She has experienced all sorts of bad weather. She says now that while her work is poorly paid she has learned how to go hungry for a few days at a time and so she has found peace. Men and women have gone to the stake or the beasts without fear. They have undergone every privation, suffered every disaster,

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without the loss of inward joy.

What the world needs is not comfort but consecration. Heaven cannot be a place of ease. It is in high endeavor, endeavor shot through with glorious hopes, that there is the fathomless content of the soul. We waste our sympathy upon those who die for humanity. It is we who have missed the inspiration who deserve the pity of men. If ever we come to some crisis in life where the mighty misery of men awakens high devotion in us we shall understand the peace of God which Jesus promises us, and we shall also understand the pledge that is given in that hour for the redemption of the world from sin. It is when the good die for the bad, the innocent for the guilty, that we get a clear conception of that spiritual warp in things, on which God is weaving the whole pattern of human existence, now and forever.

THE GOAL

THERE is still a quite common impression among critics of Universalism that it is simply a death and glory scheme which ignores all moral realities and cancels all moral distinctions. The purport of this series of sketches of phases of Universalist thought is to make clear that the Universalist faith in the final harmony of all souls with God is simply a conclusion drawn from a philosophy of life which is absolutely inclusive of the whole experience and history of man. Again it is repeatedly said that ours is a shallow optimism which glides superficially over the bad spots in the road and the dark places in life. On the contrary it is the philosophy of Universalism which really touches bottom in life, for it is the only philosophy which does not try to dodge, or run away from the facts. It will not even permit any theory of life which drags in some esoteric dogma to save man from the pressure of the facts themselves. Universalism faces the moral discipline of life with entire frankness. It is conscious of the awful significance of this discipline. It sees no possible escape from it. Its only hope is in the nature of this moral discipline. If it will not save us from sin no outside agency will be of the slightest avail. Universalism knows that the pains of hell get

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hold of men. It sees the processes of retribution going on everywhere. It feels the whole world in the grip of a moral compensation which will not deviate, cannot be evaded, must grind its grist. Perhaps no modern author has put the conviction of Universalism concerning the moral laws of creation more accurately and clearly than John Burroughs in his little poem "Waiting," of which the final stanza runs:

"The stars come nightly to the sky:
The tidal waves unto the sea:
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,
Can keep my own away from me."

How, then, do we feel so confident that this inexorable and unbending universe is kind? And how are we persuaded that the swing of creation is upward to the goal? To answer these questions with the force of the real argument we must retrace our steps. We must go back to our original proposition and follow man in his history. We can outline the story in a few sentences. Man is a climber. His natural bent is toward truth. Through all his blundering history he has been seeking light, has been hungry for more life. He has come from the cave and the wigwam to his present estate through the operation of his original, prophetic heredity. At every step of his advance nature has assisted man. There are eddies and whirlpools in the stream of events. There are places, many of them, on the way, where powerful, blind impulses

THE GOAL

have played havoc with the good intentions of the race or the individual. But in totalling the whole process the nature of man and the forces of nature have pushed and pulled him ever up. The sign of this ascent is religion itself. For religion is in the last analysis man's noblest dream of life. And so religion is the vision of the unrealized and unseen, the anchor within the veil, the to-morrow of possibility, the impossible also beyond, the unutterable, unworded aspiration and desire which stir like cosmic emotion in this strange pilgrim of the world. This synthesis of elemental anticipations which we call religion has been the cloud and pillar of fire going before man through all his wanderings. And this religion, this spiritual unfolding within, has brought man to the consciousness of the solidarity of the race. He feels the weight of all the weary world on his own soul. He bears in himself the guilt of humanity. He finds his only peace in self-sacrifice. He knows with ever deeper intuition that the worst and the best are inseparable, and that the best must stand forever as pledge of that sympathy which saves the worst. He sees in the life and death of Jesus Christ the consummation and the personification of this divine process.

Here, then, Universalists stand in the midst of our rushing, teeming life. We dodge no fact. We face life's darkest sins. We pause before the mighty tragedies. We hear the cries of men. We hear the

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moan and curse. We understand the injustice. We know that the world is very wicked sometimes. Yet above the tumult and the agony and the tears of men we see the face of infinite compassion. Beyond the echo of the curse or jeer we hear that sweet voice calling, ever calling in the soul. We confess that we are prodigals. But we know that we must go home sometime. We know we were not made to live with swine. We know that we shall never, never find our peace in the sty, or eating these husks. The divine pressure is on us. The eternal unrest is in us. Nor do we have any conceit that we are not as other men are. The heaven is at work everywhere. It is hidden in the souls of men. It will at last transform all. The law of man, of the world, of God, is perfect, for it converts the soul.

What lies beyond we do not undertake to say. Somewhere toward the Infinite is the goal. Let Brown-ing speak the last word of our supreme confidence.

“I go to prove my soul:

I see my way as birds their trackless way.

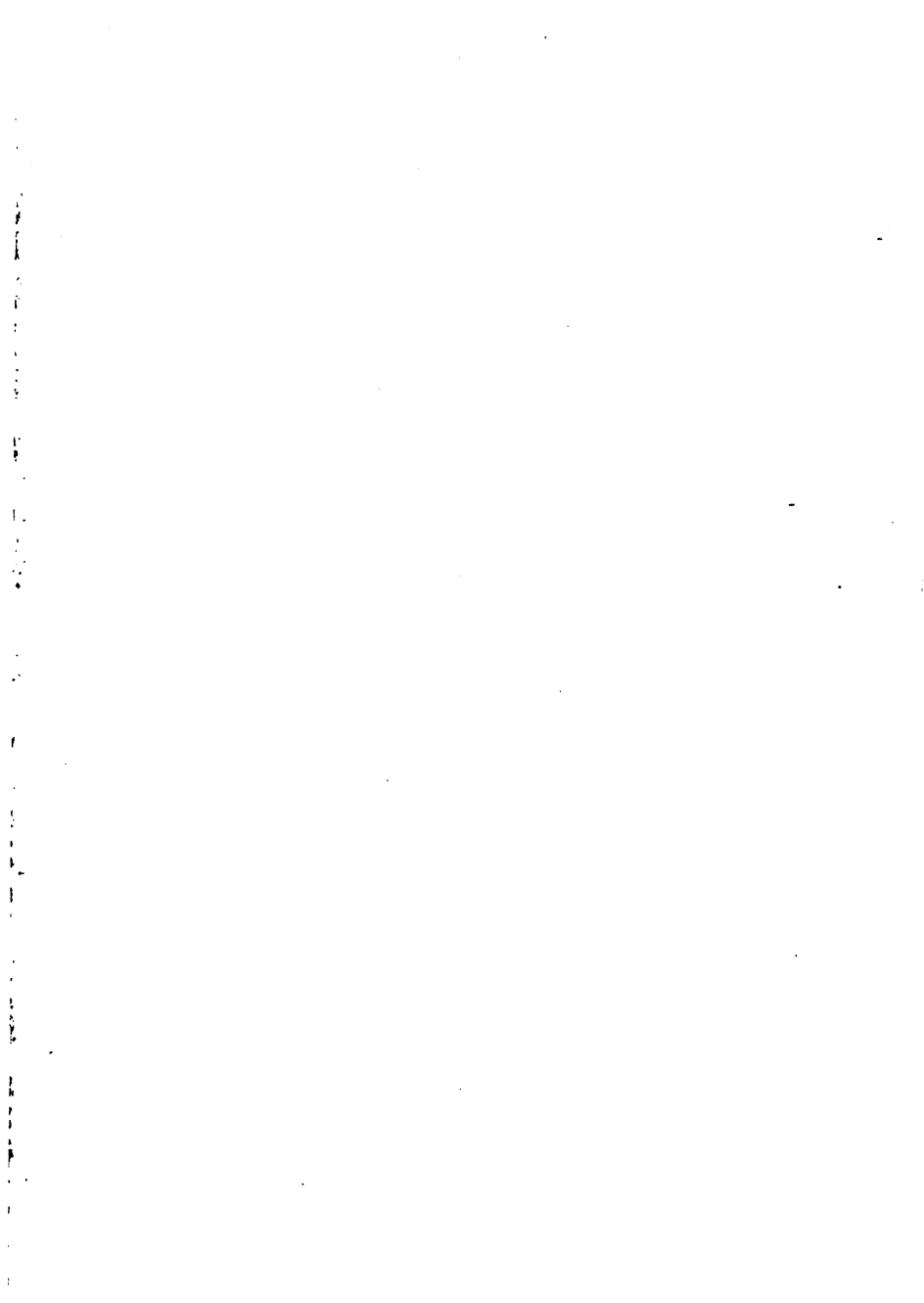
I shall arrive: what time, what circuit first,

I ask not.

In some time, his good time, I shall arrive.

He guides me as the bird. In his good time.”





~~APR 30 1979~~

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